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Before You Take a Bite

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By [Anthony Carotenuto, Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center](#)

Aviation Ordnanceman 1st Class Jesse D. Eldridge and Aviation Ordnanceman 1st Class Jason B. Va...
chops and hamburgers during a steel beach picnic aboard the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77).
photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jennifer L. Jaqua/Released)

Navy Medicine Video

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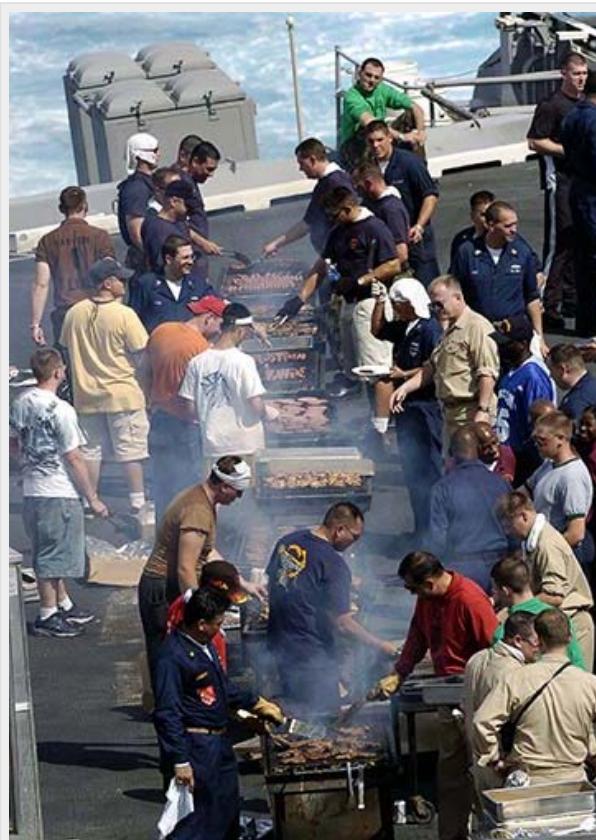
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[November 2014 \(11\)](#)

According to the CDC, food borne illnesses increase during the summer months partly because people cook and eat outdoors at events more often. The usual safety measures at our disposal when cooking indoors, including thermostat-controlled cooking, refrigeration and washing facilities, may not be available or may be substandard at outdoor events.

Another reason is the natural cause. Bacteria are present throughout the environment and in the bodies of people and animals. Many microorganisms grow faster in the warm temperatures. Most foodborne illness associated bacteria grow fastest at temperatures from 90 to 110° F. Bacteria also need moisture and the summer weather is often hot and humid. This can allow harmful bacteria to grow rapidly and in large numbers. When this happens, someone eating the food can get sick. Food borne illnesses afflict all age groups but those at the highest risk are the young, elderly and those already struggling with illness.

"We can still enjoy outdoor dining events with just some simple food safety knowledge," said Lt. Cmdr. David Cepeda, NMCPHC microbiologist.



Crew members aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) prepare steaks, chicken, hotdogs, and hamburgers over charcoal grills during a Steel Beach picnic held on the flight deck. (U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 2nd Class Seth C. Peterson)

your hands with hot soapy water before handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers and handling pets. When eating away from home, find out if there's a source of a safe drinking water. If not, bring water for preparing and cleaning. Or pack clean, wet, disposable washcloths, moist towelettes and paper towels for cleaning hands and surfaces.

When buying food from an outdoor vendor the CDC recommends looking for food safety

[October 2014 \(15\)](#)

[September 2014 \(20\)](#)

[August 2014 \(14\)](#)

[July 2014 \(13\)](#)

[June 2014 \(8\)](#)

[May 2014 \(11\)](#)

[April 2014 \(9\)](#)

[March 2014 \(14\)](#)

[February 2014 \(7\)](#)

[January 2014 \(7\)](#)

[December 2013 \(7\)](#)

[November 2013 \(12\)](#)

[October 2013 \(7\)](#)

[September 2013 \(14\)](#)

[August 2013 \(13\)](#)

[July 2013 \(11\)](#)

[June 2013 \(22\)](#)

[May 2013 \(15\)](#)

[April 2013 \(14\)](#)

[March 2013 \(14\)](#)

[February 2013 \(14\)](#)

[January 2013 \(12\)](#)

[December 2012 \(11\)](#)

[November 2012 \(11\)](#)

[October 2012 \(7\)](#)

[September 2012 \(9\)](#)

[August 2012 \(12\)](#)

[July 2012 \(13\)](#)

[June 2012 \(17\)](#)

[May 2012 \(22\)](#)

[April 2012 \(14\)](#)

[March 2012 \(13\)](#)

[February 2012 \(14\)](#)

[January 2012 \(13\)](#)

[December 2011 \(13\)](#)

[November 2011 \(20\)](#)

[October 2011 \(22\)](#)

[September 2011 \(12\)](#)

[August 2011 \(16\)](#)

July 2011 (10)

practices, such as a clean workstation, employees washing their hands, employees wearing gloves or using tongs, if the vendor been inspected by the local health department, and has the license to sell food. When you get the PHFs from a vendor a simple rule of thumb is that hot foods should be hot and cold foods should be cold. Never eat or drink PHFs that are lukewarm. If you bring food to a fair or festival from home, be sure to keep food handling and storage times in mind. Don't let food sit out for more than two hours. On a hot day (90°F or higher), reduce this time to one hour.

If you fancy yourself as a grill master and are entertaining at home applying some simple food safety principle can assure that your food is delicious and safe! Use these simple guidelines when grilling foods. Defrost PHFs either in a refrigerator. If using a microwave to defrost the food should be immediately placed on the grill after thawed. Marinate foods in the refrigerator and not at room temperatures. If you have leftover marinade that will be used as a sauce on the cooked food, reserve a portion of the marinade before putting raw meat and poultry in it. If you are going to use marinade that has had raw meat and poultry in it, make sure to let it come to a boil so it can destroy any harmful bacteria. Keep your foods refrigerated until ready to use. Only take the foods out when you are ready to place on the grill. Make sure your prep area is kept clean. Never use the same platter, pans or utensils used for raw foods. Any good cook has a good and functioning food thermometer. This addition to your grilling arsenal can help you make sure foods are cooked to correct temperature for your family and guess. This greatly reduces the risk of illness.

Cook food to a safe internal temperature to destroy harmful bacteria. Meat and poultry cooked on a grill often browns very fast on the outside. Poultry should reach 165°F; hamburgers made of ground beef should reach 155°F; veal, and lamb steaks, roast beef and pork chops can be cooked to 145°F. NEVER partially grill meat or poultry and finish cooking later. When reheating cooked meats like hot dogs, grill to 165°F or until steaming hot.

After cooking meat and poultry on the grill, keep it hot, 135°F or warmer until served. Lastly refrigerate any leftovers promptly in shallow containers. Discard any leftovers left out more than more than four hours at room temperature (approximately 68 to 72°F) or one hour if temperatures are above 90°F.

Though summertime eating can present some food safety challenges following these simple principles stated above can ensure that the foods we prepare, serve are safe. Let us stay healthy and enjoy those picnics, festivals, carnivals and outdoor grilling events. Have fun and be safe! For further information on summertime safe eating please click [here](#).

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